

TABERNACLE SERVICES.

REV. DR. TALMAGE DISCOURSES ON "OBSCURATION."

The Bible the Only Restraint Against the Evil Passions of the World—Atheism and Infidelity Arrayed Against Christianity.

BROOKLYN, May 13.—This morning the Rev. Dr. Talmage, D. D., preached at the Tabernacle to an overflowing congregation. The hymn beginning:

Stand up, my soul; shake off thy fears,
And gird the Gospel armor on.

was sung with magnificent effect. Dr. Talmage's subject was "Obscuration," and his text, "The sun shall be turned into darkness."—Acts ii, 20. He said:

Solar eclipse is here prophesied to take place about the time of the destruction of ancient Jerusalem. Josephus, the historian, says that the prophecy was literally fulfilled, and that about that time there were strange appearances in the heavens. The sun was not destroyed, but for a little while hidden.

Christianity is the rising sun of our time, and men have tried with the upholding vapors of skepticism and the smoke of their blasphemy to turn the sun into darkness. Suppose the archangels of malice and horror should be let loose a little while and be allowed to extinguish and destroy the sun in the natural heavens. They would take the oceans from other worlds and pour them on this luminary of the planetary system, and the waters gushing down amid the ravines and the caverns, and there is explosion after explosion until there are only a few peaks of fire left in the sun, and these are cooling down and going out until the vast continents of flame are reduced to a small acreage of fire, and that whitens and cools off until there are only a few coals left, and these are whitening and going out until there is not a spark left in all the mountains of ashes and the valleys of ashes and the chains of sun. An extinguished sun. A dead sun. A buried sun. Let all worlds wait at the stupendous obsequies.

Of course this withdrawal of the solar heat and light throws our earth into a universal chill, and the tropics become the temperate and the temperate becomes the Arctic, and there are frozen rivers and frozen lakes and frozen oceans. From Arctic and Antarctic regions the inhabitants gather in toward the center and find the equator as the poles. The slain forests are piled up into a great bonfire, and around them gather the shivering villages and cities. The wealth of the coal mines is hastily poured into the furnaces and stirred into rage of combustion, but soon the bonfires begin to lower and the furnaces begin to go out and the nations begin to die. Cotopaxi, Vesuvius, Etna, Stromboli, Californian geysers cease to smoke, and the ice of hail storms remains unmelting in their craters. All the flowers have breathed their last breath. Ships with sailors frozen at the mast and helmsmen frozen at the wheel, and passengers frozen in the cabin; all nations dying, first at the north and then at the south. Child frosted and dead in the cradle. Octogenarian frosted and dead at the hearth. Workmen with frozen hands on the hammer and frozen foot on the shuttle. Winter from sea to sea. All congealing winter. Perpetual winter. Globe of frigidify. Hemisphere shackled to hemisphere by chains of ice. Universal Nova Zembla. The earth an ice floe grinding against other ice floes. The archangels of malice and horror have done their work, and now they may take their thrones of glacier and look down upon the ruin they have wrought.

What the destruction of the sun in the natural heavens would be to our physical earth, the destruction of Christianity would be to the moral world. The sun turned into darkness. Infidelity in our time is considered a great joke. There are people who rejoice to hear Christianity caricatured, and to hear Christ assailed with quibble and quirk and misrepresentation and bandage and harlequinade.

I propose this morning to take infidelity and atheism out of the realm of jocularity into one of tragedy, and show you what they propose, and what, if they are successful, they will accomplish. There are those in all our communities who would like to see the Christian religion overthrown, and who say the world would be better without it. I want to show you what is the end of this road, and what is the terminus of this crusade, and what this world will be when atheism and infidelity have triumphed over it, if they can. I say, if they can. I reiterate it, if they can.

In the first place, it will be the complete and unutterable degradation of womanhood. I will prove it by facts and arguments which no honest man will dispute. In all communities and cities and states and nations where the Christian religion has been dominant, woman's condition has been ameliorated and improved, and she is deferred to and honored in a thousand things, and every gentleman takes off his hat before her. Your associations have been good, you know that the name of wife, mother, daughter, suggest gracious surroundings. You know there are no better schools and seminaries in Brooklyn or in any city of this country than the schools and seminaries for young ladies. You know that while woman may suffer injustice in England and the United States, she has more of her rights in Christendom than she has anywhere else.

Now, compare this with woman's condition in lands where Christianity has made little or no advance—in China, in Barbary, in Borneo, in Tartary, in Egypt, in Hindustan. The Hindoos sell their wives and daughters as so many sheep. The Hindoo Bible makes it disgraceful and an outrage for a woman to listen to music or look out of the window in the absence of her husband, and gives as a lawful ground for divorce a woman's beginning to eat before her husband has finished his meal. What mean those white bundles on the ponds and rivers in China in the morning? Infanticide following infanticide. Female children destroyed simply because they are female. Woman harnessed to a plow as an ox. Woman veiled and barricaded, and in all styles of cruel seclusion. Her birth a misfortune. Her life a torture. Her death a horror. The missionary of the cross today in heathen lands preaches generally to two groups—a group of men who do as they please and sit where they please; the other group women hidden and carefully secluded in a side apartment, where they may hear the voice of the preacher but may not be seen. No refinement. No liberty. No hope for this life. No hope for the life to come. Ringed nose. Cramped foot. Disfigured face. Embruted soul. Now compare those two conditions. How far toward the latter condition that I speak of would woman go if Christian influences were withdrawn and Christianity were destroyed? It is only a question of dynamics. If an object be lifted to a certain point and not fastened there, and the lifting power be withdrawn, how long before that object will fall down to the point from which it started? It will fall down, and it will go still further than the point from which it started. Christianity has lifted woman up from the very depths of degradation almost to the skies. If that

lifting power be withdrawn she falls clear back to the depth from which she was rescued, not going any lower because there is no lower depth. And yet, notwithstanding the fact that the only salvation of woman from degradation and woe is the Christian religion, and the only influence that has ever lifted her in the social scale is Christianity—I have read that there are women who reject Christianity. I make no remark in regard to those persons. I make no remark in regard to them. In the silence of your own soul make your observations.

If infidelity triumph and Christianity be overthrown, it means the demoralization of society. The one idea in the Bible that atheists and infidels most hate, is the idea of retribution. Take away the idea of retribution and punishment from society, and it will begin very soon to disintegrate; and take away from the minds of men the fear of hell, and there are a great many of them who would very soon turn this world into a hell. The majority of those who are indignant against the Bible because of the idea of punishment are men whose lives are bad or whose hearts are impure, and who hate the Bible because of the idea of future punishment for the same reason that criminals hate the penitentiary. Oh, I have heard this brave talk about people fearing nothing of the consequences of sin in the next world, and I have made up my mind it is merely a coward's whistling to keep his courage up. I have seen men flaunt their immoralities in the face of the community, and I have heard them defy the judgment day and scoff at the idea of any future consequence of their sin; but when they came to die they shrieked until you could hear them for nearly two blocks, and in the summer night the neighbors got up to put the windows down because they could not endure the horror.

I would not want to see a rail train with five hundred Christian people on board go down through a drawbridge into a watery grave. I would not want to see five hundred Christian people go into such disaster, but I tell you plainly that I could more easily see that than I could for any protracted time stand and see an infidel die, though his pillow were of elder down and under a canopy of vermilion. I have never been able to brace up my nerves for such a spectacle. There is something at such a time so indescribable in the countenance. I just looked in upon it for a minute or two, but the clutch of his fist was so diabolic, and the strength of voice was so unnatural, I could not endure it. "There is no hell, there is no hell, there is no hell!" the man had said for sixty years; but that night when I looked in the dying room of my infidel neighbor, there was something on his countenance which seemed to say: "There is, there is, there is, there is!"

The mightiest restraints today against theft, against immorality, against libertinism, against crime of all sorts—the mightiest restraints are the retributions of eternity. Men know that they can escape the law, but down in the offender's soul there is the realization of the fact that they cannot escape God. He stands at the end of the road of profligacy, and he will not clear the guilty. Take all idea of retribution and punishment out of the hearts and minds of men, and it would not be long before Brooklyn and New York and Boston and Charleston and Chicago became Sodoma. The only restraints against the evil passions of the world today are Bible restraints.

Suppose now these generals of atheism and infidelity got the victory, and suppose they marshaled a great army made up of the majority of the world. They are in companies, in regiments, in brigades—the whole army. Forward march! ye hosts of infidels and atheists, banners flying before, banners flying behind, banners inscribed with the words: "No God! No Christ! No punishment! No restraints! Down with the Bible! Do as you please!" The sun turned into darkness.

Forward, march! ye great army of infidels and atheists! And first of all you will attack the churches. Away with those houses of worship! They have been standing there so long and deluding the people with consolation in their bereavements and sorrows. All those churches ought to be extirpated; they have done so much to relieve the lost and bring home the wandering, and they have so long held up the idea of eternal rest after the paroxysm of this life is over. Turn the St. Peters and St. Pauls and the temples and tabernacles into club houses. Away with those churches!

Forward, march! ye great army of infidels and atheists, and next of all they will attack the Sabbath schools—the Sabbath schools filled with bright eyed, bright cheeked little ones, who are singing songs on Sunday afternoon, and getting instruction when they ought to be on the street corners playing marbles or swearing on the common. Away with them! Forward, march! ye great army of infidels and atheists, and next of all they will attack Christian asylums—the institutions of mercy supported by Christian philanthropies. Never mind the blind eyes and the deaf ears and the crippled limbs and the weakened intellects. Let paralyzed old age pick up its own food, and paraplegics fight their own way, and the half reformed back to their evil habits. Forward, march! ye great army of infidels and atheists, and with your battle axes hew down the cross and split up the manger of Bethlehem.

On, ye great army of infidels and atheists, and now they come to the graveyards and the cemeteries of the earth. Pull down the sculpture above Greenwood's gate, for it means the resurrection. Tear away at the entrance of Laurel Hill the figure of Old Mortality and the chisel. On, ye great army of infidels and atheists, into the graveyards and the cemeteries; and where you see "Asleep in Jesus," cut it away, cut it away, and you find a marble story of heaven, blast it, and where you find over a little child's grave, "Suffer little children to come unto me," substitute the words "delusion" and "sham," and where you find an angel in marble, strike off the wings, and when you come to a family vault, chisel on the door: "Dead once, dead forever."

But on, ye great army of infidels and atheists, on! They will attempt to scale heaven. There are heights to be taken. Pile hill on hill and Pelion upon Ossa, and then they hoist the ladders against the walls of heaven. On and on until they blow up the foundations of jasper and the gates of pearl. They charge up the steep. Now they aim for the throne of him who liveth forever and ever. They would take down from their high place the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. "Down with them!" they say. "Down with him from the throne!" they say. "Down forever! Down out of sight! He is not God. He has no right to sit there. Down with him! Down with Christ!"

A world without a head, a universe without a king. Orphan constellations. Fatherless galaxies. Anarchy supreme. A de-throned Jehovah. An assassinated God. Parricide, regicide, deicide. That is what they mean. That is what they will have, if they can, if they can, if they can. Civilization buried back into semi-barbarism, and semi-barbarism driven back into Hottentot savagery. The wheel of progress turned the other way, and turned toward the dark ages. The clock of the centuries put back 2,000 years. Go back, you Sandwich Islands, from your schools and from your colleges, and from your reformed condition, to what you were in 1825, when the missionaries first came. Call home the 900 missionaries from

India and overthrow their 3,000 schools, where they are trying to educate the heathen, and scatter the 140,000 little children that they have gathered out of barbarism into civilization. Obliterate all the work of Dr. Duff in India, of David Abol in China, of Dr. King in Greece, of Judson in Burmah, of David Brainerd amid the American aborigines, and send home the three thousand missionaries of the cross who are toiling in foreign lands, toiling for Christ's sake, toiling themselves into the grave. Tell these three thousand men of God that they are of no use. Send home the medical missionaries who are doctoring the bodies as well as the souls of the nations. Go home, London missionary society. Go home, American board of foreign missions. Go home, ye Moravians, and relinquish back into darkness and squalor and filth and death the nations whom ye have begun to lift.

Oh, my friends, there has never been such a nefarious plot on earth as that which infidelity and atheism have planned. We were shocked a few years ago because of the attempt to blow up the parliament houses in London; but if infidelity and atheism succeed in their attempt they will dynamite a world. Let them have their full way and this world will be a habitation of three rooms—a habitation with just three rooms: the one a madhouse, another a lazaretto, the other a pandemonium. Those infidel bands of music have only just begun their concert—yes, they have only been stringing their instruments. I today put before you their whole programme from beginning until close. In the theatre the tragedy comes first and the farce afterward; but in this infidel drama of death the farce comes first and the tragedy afterward. And in the former theists and infidels laugh and mock, but in the latter God himself will laugh and mock. He says so. "I will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh."

From such a chasm of individual, national, world wide ruin, stand back. Oh, young men, stand back from that chasm! You see the practical drift of their sermon. I want you to know where that road leads. Stand back from that chasm of ruin. The time is going to come to you and I may not live to see it, but it will come, just as certainly as there is a God, it will come when the infidels and the atheists who openly and out and out and above board preach and practice infidelity and atheism will be considered as criminals against society, as they are now criminals against God. Society will push out the leper, and the wretch with soul grangrened and ichorous and vermin covered and rotting apart with his bestiality, will be left to die in the ditch, and be denied decent burial, and men will come with spades and cover up the carcasses, where it falls, that it poison not the air, and the only text in all the Bible appropriate for the funeral sermon will be Jeremiah xxii, 19: "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass."

A thousand voices come up to me this morning, saying: "Do you really think infidelity will succeed? Has Christianity received its death blow? and will the Bible become obsolete? Yes, when the smoke of the city chimney arrests and destroys the noonday sun. Josephus says about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem the sun was turned into darkness; but only the clouds rolled between the sun and the earth. The sun went right on. It is the same sun, the same luminary as when at the beginning it shot out like an electric spark from God's finger, and today it is warming the nations, and today it is guiding the sea, and today it is filling the earth with light. The same old sun, not at all worn out, though its light steps one hundred and ninety million miles a second, though its pulsations are four hundred and fifty trillion undulations in a second. Same sun with beautiful white light made up of the violet and the indigo and the blue and the green and the red and the yellow and the orange—the seven beautiful colors now just as when the solar spectrum first divided them.

At the beginning God said: "Let there be light," and light was, and light is, and light shall be. So Christianity is rolling on, and it is going to warm all nations, and all nations are to bask in its light. Men may shut the window blinds so they cannot see it, or they may smoke the pipe of speculation until they are shadowed under their own vapor; but the Lord God is a sun! This white light of the Gospel made up of all the beautiful colors of earth and heaven, violet plucked from amid the spring grass, and the indigo of the southern jungles and the blue of the skies, and the green of the foliage, and the yellow of the autumnal woods, and the orange of the southern groves, and the red of the sunsets. All the beauties of earth and heaven brought out by this spiritual spectrum. Great Britain is going to take all Europe for God. The United States are going to take all America for God. Both of them together will take all Asia for God. All three of them will take Africa for God. "Who art thou, oh great mountain! before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Hallelujah, amen!

Growth of an Oil Town.

When a successful well has been developed in a new field a town springs up about it like magic. The men who flock to a new oil field are a jolly, good natured set of fellows, for all are millionaires in prospective. Houses are commenced, finished, papered and painted and occupied in a week. Hotels, with all the conveniences of the city hostelry, spring up in a fortnight, and in their wake follow the saloons that are the oil man's unending delight. The hotel and barroom are the business centers of a new oil town, and in these places, crowded day and night, leases are made, contracts signed and deals concluded with a promptness and a careless abandon that would startle even a wide awake Chicago broker. Tool, machine and supply shops come in response to the demands of the operator. The theatrical sharp scouts his game from afar, and his variety theatre is crowded nightly, while brothels, faro rooms and gambling halls open up by the score. The raffra of older oil towns follow in the wake of the first comers, and the new city, the site of which six months before was little more than a wilderness, is a full grown oil town, with all the bustle, dash and wickedness for which such places are famed.—Rufus R. Wilson in San Francisco Chronicle.

The Crooked Creek—A Fable.

A Spring Which had overflowed its banks started to empty its Waters into a Lake a few miles distant. One Peasant, who had plenty of Water on his land, protested against More, and the little Creek turned to the left to avoid him. Another, who had no Water at all, begged the Creek to approach, and it turned to the right. A third, who couldn't make up his mind whether he Wanted more Water or not, sent the Creek off on a curve, and a fourth changed his Mind so often that the Creek became all tangled up in the effort to please him. When it finally reached the Lake a Sage who stood on the banks felt to observe: "Alas! but you have traveled over a course of three miles in order to make one! Why such a waste of time and Energy?" "My Friend," replied the Creek in a Vinegary way, "in an effort to Please all I have failed to Please even one, and hereafter the public can pump its own aqua pura." Moral: And the Creek very Wisely dried up.—Detroit Free Press.

Material for Gun Metal.

An old man, bent with the weight of some 70 or 80 years, shuffled into the store of a Seventh avenue gunsmith the other day and deposited a small canvas bag on the counter. The gunsmith opened it, emptied a lot of horseshoe nails which it contained into a pair of scales, and after weighing them passed some pieces of silver over to the old fellow. The white head bowed curtsy, took up his bag again and disappeared through the half open door as quietly as he came.

The gunsmith said that he had been buying nails from the old man in the same way for some two or three years. The man picked them up in the street just as the Italian population gather cigar butts, only nails are even more easily found than cigars, and the competition is at a minimum.

"I buy the nails," said the manufacturer of firearms, "because they are made of metal that is best suited for the construction of gun barrels, and because in buying them as I do I get at a very low price some rather expensive material. Every morning before sunrise my old fellow hurries over to Coney Island market, from thence to Washington market, and afterward to other places where the country produce wagons congregate at early day-break. There is sure to be a number of cast shoes lying about, and quite a quantity of nails. These he picks up in short order. Then after he has had breakfast I fancy that he goes to certain blacksmith shops whose proprietors allow him to take away what old nails he can find on the floor. He probably is not enabled to make a living at this business alone, for he only brings me from fifty cents to \$1 worth of nails a week. I fancy that he has other sources of income, but he can nevertheless pay the rent of some cheap garret with what I give him each week."—New York Evening Sun.

Losing Their Good Breeding.

"Yes, sir, the men of Chicago are not what they used to be," said a well known man about town to a reporter. "There has been within the past few years a decided decline in gallantry and courtesy. The men are losing their good breeding, their deferential manner toward women, their respect for the sex. It used to be the rule in Chicago, and that not so long ago, either, that any woman, old or young, pretty or homely, met with a certain amount of consideration at the hands of the men. Such a sight as a woman standing up in a horse car and a man seated at the same time was not to be met with in those days. And it cut no figure then whether the woman was elegant and handsome or the reverse."

"It was the sex which found universal reverence. Look at the facts to-day. Where formerly men used to chaperone women to theatres or concerts, nine times out of ten from mere kindness of heart, so as to give the dear creatures a pleasure, even if it happened to be wrinkled in the face, or anything but good looking, you will now see men take notice but a pretty woman standing up in a horse car and a man seated at the same time was not to be met with in those days. And it cut no figure then whether the woman was elegant and handsome or the reverse."

Sailors Corralled by Sharks.

A dinghy with grass from Dwarka founded not very far from Bate, a port on the Cutch coast, while she was on her way to Karachi, when the crew, consisting of seven, took to the mast, which had unshipped. At the time she founded the vessel was very close to the shore, and the crew were gradually working their way toward the beach when one of their number was heard to shriek, and immediately disappeared, and the others, to their horror, realized that they were surrounded by sharks, with no means of escaping, as the mast not only gave with their weight, but could not be kept steady on account of the rough state of the sea. The men were in a state of anxiety and fear, not knowing whose turn would come next. One by one the men suddenly disappeared, until only one remained, and by this time, the storm having subsided, he managed to balance himself steadily on the mast, which drifted toward the beach on the following day. He was thus tossed about upon the sea, expecting every moment to be his last, for two days and a night.—London Times.

A True Lover of Books.

"But of bookmen as well as books there is literally no end. There are bibliographers, bibliopagists, bibliolatrists and biblio everything else. Last but not least is the bibliophile. He is the only true lover and worshiper of books. He collects books for what is in them, not, however, as the professional man does. The bibliophile will not look upon books as mere tools, but as trustworthy friends. He is an earnest student of all good literature, which he demands shall be served to him in the best possible form. He will tolerate none but the best books, and those must be appropriately and substantially bound. It gives him as much pain to see a worthy tome a begging for a suitable covering as it does to see one's best friend in ragged attire.

"If you would be a book collector," concluded the old bookman, as he turned to resume his work, "go to the bibliophile, consider his ways and be wise."—New York Press.

An Indian Battle Ax.

A tomahawk, or battle ax, weighing three pounds has been found on the banks of Richmond creek, in Green county, Georgia. Old settlers say it was once used by Custagee, one of the most dreaded Indian braves, who resisted the advance of the whites into that part of the country. The ax is a specimen of perfect workmanship and is cut from a piece of quartz rock.—Brooklyn Eagle.

Latest in House Decoration.

The latest really beautiful thing in English house decoration is a brass gate and a velvet curtain to replace the inner door in what Philadelphians call "the space," and Bostonians occupying very small houses style "the hall." The gate is very elaborately wrought and fastens with a secret spring.—New York Commercial Advertiser.

A Prehistoric Relic.

A handsome relic of the mound builders, consisting of a piece of carnelian beautifully carved in the shape of a boat, was recently dug up near Alton, Ills. It is about five inches long, and a gem of artistic lapidary work. It has been identified as a sacred badge stone worn by some prehistoric chief.—New York Evening World.

Onyx in Kentucky.

There has recently been discovered in Southern Kentucky a very fine grade of onyx. Heretofore onyx has been found only in Mexico. The mineral is extensively used for decorative purposes, and the discovery of it in the United States will tend to cheapen it and extend its use.—Chicago Herald.

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